This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

WITHIN THE RIM

HENRY JAMES

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WITHIN THE RIM
AND OTHER ESSAYS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WITHIN THE RIM

AND OTHER ESSAYS

1914-15

HENRY JAMES

LONDON: 48 PALL MALL
W. COLLINS SONS & CO. LTD.
GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

Digitized by Google

813.3
J27wr

Copyright 1918

Digitized by Google

Within the Rim—Written in Feb. 1915 for Miss E. Asquith for a proposed album in aid of the Arts Fund. The idea of the album was abandoned, and the article was ultimately published in the *Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1917.

Refugees in Chelsea—Published in the *Times* Literary Supplement, March 23, 1916.

The American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance Corps in France: A Letter to the Editor of an American Journal—Issued as a pamphlet, 1914.

France—Published in *The Book of France*, edited by Winifred Stephens, Macmillan, 1915.

The Long Wards—Published in *The Book of the Homeless*, edited by Edith Wharton, Macmillan, 1916.

Thanks are due in each case for the permission to reprint these essays.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

	PAGE
WITHIN THE RIM	11
REFUGEES IN CHELSEA	39
THE AMERICAN VOLUNTEER MOTOR-AMBULANCE CORPS IN FRANCE: *A Letter to the Editor of an American Journal*	63
FRANCE	83
THE LONG WARDS	97

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WITHIN THE RIM

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WITHIN THE RIM

THE first sense of it all to me after the first shock and horror was that of a sudden leap back into life of the violence with which the American Civil War broke upon us, at the North, fifty-four years ago, when I had a consciousness of youth which perhaps equalled in vivacity my present consciousness of age. The illusion was complete, in its immediate rush; everything quite exactly matched in the two cases; the tension of the hours after the flag of the Union had been fired upon in South Carolina living again, with a tragic strangeness of recurrence, in the interval during which the fate of Belgium hung in the scales and the possibilities of that of France looked this country harder in the face, one recognised, than any possibility, even that of the England of the Armada, even that of the long Napoleonic menace, could be

Digitized by Google

imagined to have looked her. The analogy quickened and deepened with every elapsing hour ; the drop of the balance under the invasion of Belgium reproduced with intensity the agitation of the New England air by Mr Lincoln's call to arms, and I went about for a short space as with the queer secret locked in my breast of at least already knowing how such occasions helped and what a big war was going to mean. That this was literally a light in the darkness, or that it materially helped the prospect to be considered, is perhaps more than I can say; but it at least added the strangest of savours, an inexpressible romantic thrill, to the harsh taste of the crisis : I found myself literally knowing 'by experience' what immensities, what monstrosities, what revelations of what immeasurabilities, our affair would carry in its bosom—a knowledge that flattered me by its hint of immunity from illusion. The sudden new tang in the atmosphere, the flagrant difference, as one noted, in the look of everything, especially in that of people's faces, the expressions, the hushes, the clustered

Digitized by Google

groups, the detached wanderers and slow-paced public meditators, were so many impressions long before received and in which the stretch of more than half a century had still left a sharpness. So I took the case in and drew a vague comfort, I can scarce say why, from recognition; so, while recognition lasted, I found it come home to me that we, we of the ancient day, had known, had tremendously learnt, what the awful business is when it is 'long,' when it remains for months and months bitter and arid, void even of any great honour. In consequence of which, under the rapid rise of presumptions of difficulty, to whatever effect of dismay or of excitement, my possession of something like a standard of difficulty, and, as I might perhaps feel too, of success, became in its way a private luxury.

My point is, however, that upon this luxury I was allowed after all but ever so scantily to feed. I am unable to say when exactly it was that the rich analogy, the fine and sharp identity between the faded and the vivid case broke down, with the support obscurely derived from them; the moment

Digitized by Google

anyhow came soon enough at which experience felt the ground give way and that one swung off into space, into history, into darkness, with every lamp extinguished and every abyss gaping. It ceased quite to matter for reassurance that the victory of the North had been so delayed and yet so complete, that our struggle had worn upon the world of the time, and quite to exasperation, as could well be remembered, by its length; if the present complication should but begin to be as long as it was broad no term of comparison borrowed from the past would so much as begin to fit it. I might have found it humiliating; in fact, however, I found it of the most commanding interest, whether at certain hours of dire apprehension or at certain others of the finer probability, that the biggest like convulsion our generations had known was still but too clearly to be left far behind for exaltations and terrors, for effort and result, as a general exhibition of the perversity of nations and of the energy of man. Such at least was the turn the comparison took at a given moment in a remembering

Digitized by Google

mind that had been steeped, so far as its restricted contact went, but in the Northern story; I did, I confess, cling awhile to the fancy that what loomed perhaps for England, what already did so much more than loom for crucified Belgium, what was let loose in a torrent upon indestructible France, might correspond more or less with the pressure of the old terrible time as the fighting South had had to know it, and with the grim conditions under which she had at last given way. For the rest of the matter, as I say, the difference of aspect produced by the difference of intensity cut short very soon my vision of similitude. The intensity swallowed up everything; the rate and the scale and the speed, the unprecedented engines, the vast incalculable connections, the immediate presence, as it were, of France and Belgium, whom one could hear pant, through the summer air, in their effort and their alarm, these things, with the prodigious might of the enemy added, made me say, dropping into humility in a manner that resembled not a little a drop into still greater

Digitized by Google

depths, 'Oh, no, that surely can't have been "a patch" on this!' Which conclusion made accordingly for a new experience altogether, such as I gratefully embrace here an occasion not to leave unrecorded.

It was in the first place, after the strangest fashion, a sense of the extraordinary way in which the most benign conditions of light and air, of sky and sea, the most beautiful English summer conceivable, mixed themselves with all the violence of action and passion, the other so hideous and piteous, so heroic and tragic facts, and flouted them as with the example of something far superior. Never were desperate doings so blandly lighted up as by the two unforgettable months that I was to spend so much of in looking over from the old rampart of a little high-perched Sussex town at the bright blue streak of the Channel, within a mile or two of us at its nearest point, the point to which it had receded after washing our rock-base in its earlier ages, and staring at the bright mystery beyond the rim of the farthest opaline reach. Just

Digitized by Google

on the other side of that finest of horizon-lines history was raging at a pitch new under the sun; thinly masked by that shameless smile the Belgian horror grew; the curve of the globe toward these things was of the scantest, and yet the hither spaces of the purest, the interval representing only charm and calm and ease. One grew to feel that the nearer elements, those of land and water and sky at their loveliest, were making thus, day after day, a particular prodigious point, insisting in their manner on a sense and a wondrous story which it would be the restless watcher's fault if he didn't take in. Not that these were hints or arts against which he was in the least degree proof; they penetrated with every hour deeper into the soul, and, the contemplations I speak of aiding, irresistibly worked out an endless volume of references. It was all somehow the history of the hour addressing itself to the individual mind—or to that in any case of the person, at once so appalled and so beguiled, of whose response to the whole appeal I attempt this brief account. Round about him

Digitized by Google

stretched the scene of his fondest frequentation as time had determined the habit; but it was as if every reason and every sentiment conducing to the connection had, under the shock of events, entered into solution with every other, so that the only thinkable approach to rest, that is to the recovery of an inward order, would be in restoring them each, or to as many as would serve the purpose, some individual dignity and some form.

It came indeed largely of itself, my main help to the reparatory, the re-identifying process; came by this very chance that in the splendour of the season there was no mistaking the case or the plea. 'This, as you can see better than ever before,' the elements kept conspiring to say, 'is the rare, the sole, the exquisite England whose weight now hangs in the balance, and your appreciation of whose value, much as in the easy years you may have taken it for granted, seems exposed to some fresh and strange and strong determinant, something that breaks in like a character of high colour in a play.' Nothing could have thrilled me more,

Digitized by Google

I recognise, than the threat of this irruption or than the dramatic pitch; yet a degree of pain attached to the ploughed-up state it implied—so that, with an elderly dread of a waste of emotion, I fear I almost pusillanimously asked myself why a sentiment from so far back recorded as lively should need to become any livelier, and in fact should hesitate to beg off from the higher diapason. I felt as the quiet dweller in a tenement so often feels when the question of 'structural improvements' is thrust upon him; my house of the spirit, amid everything about me, had become more and more the inhabited, adjusted, familiar home, quite big enough and sound enough for the spirit's uses and with any intrinsic inconvenience corrected only since by that principle's having cultivated and formed, at whatever personal cost (since my spirit was essentially a person), the right habits, and so settled into the right attitude for practical, for contented occupation. If, however, such was my vulgar apprehension, as I put it, the case was taken out of my hands by the fate that so often

Digitized by Google

deals with these accidents, and I found myself before long building on additions and upper storys, throwing out extensions and protrusions, indulging even, all recklessly, in gables and pinnacles and battlements—things that had presently transformed the unpretending place into I scarce know what to call it, a fortress of the faith, a palace of the soul, an extravagant, bristling, flag-flying structure which had quite as much to do with the air as with the earth. And all this, when one came to return upon it in a considering or curious way, because to and fro one kept going on the old rampart, the town 'look-out,' to spend one's aching wonder again and again on the bright sky-line that at once held and mocked it. Just over that line were unutterable things, massacre and ravage and anguish, all but irresistible assault and cruelty, bewilderment and heroism all but overwhelmed; from the sense of which one had but to turn one's head to take in something unspeakably different and that yet produced, as by some extraordinary paradox, a pang almost as sharp.

Digitized by Google

It was of course by the imagination that this latter was quickened to an intensity thus akin to pain—but the imagination had doubtless at every turn, without exception, more to say to one's state of mind, and dealt more with the whole unfolding scene, than any other contributive force. Never in all my life, probably, had I been so glad to have opened betimes an account with this faculty and to be able to feel for the most part something to my credit there; so vivid I mean had to be one's prevision of the rate at which drafts on that source would require cashing. All of which is a manner of saying that in face of what during those horrible days seemed exactly over the way the old inviolate England, as to whom the fact that she *was* inviolate, in every valid sense of the term, had become, with long acquaintance, so common and dull, suddenly shone in a light never caught before and which was for the next weeks, all the magnificence of August and September, to reduce a thousand things to a sort of merciless distinctness. It was not so much that

Digitized by Google

they leaped forth, these things, under the particular recognition, as that they multiplied without end and abounded, always in some association at least that caught the eye, all together overscoring the image as a whole or causing the old accepted synthesis to bristle with accents. The image as a whole, thus richly made up of them—or of the numberless testifying touches to the effect that we were not there on our sea defence as the other, the harried, countries were behind such bulwarks as they could throw up—was the central fact of consciousness and the one to which every impression and every apprehension more or less promptly related themselves; it made of itself the company in which for the time the mind most naturally and yet most importunately lived. One walked of course in the shade of the ambiguous contrast —ambiguous because of the dark question of whether it was the liabilities of Belgium and France, to say nothing of their awful actualities, that made England's state so rare, or England's state that showed her tragic sisters for doubly outraged;

Digitized by Google

the action of the matter was at least that of one's feeling in one's hand and weighing it there with the last tenderness, for fullest value, the golden key that unlocked every compartment of the English character.

Clearly this general mystery or mixture was to be laid open under stress of fortune as never yet —the unprecedentedness was above all what came over us again and again, armaments unknown to human experience looming all the while larger and larger; but whatever face or succession of faces the genius of the race should most turn up the main mark of them all would be in the difference that, taken together, couldn't fail to keep them more unlike the peoples off there beyond than any pair even of the most approved of these peoples are unlike each other. 'Insularity!'—one had spent no small part of one's past time in mocking or in otherwise fingering the sense out of that word; yet here it was in the air wherever one looked and as stuffed with meaning as if nothing had ever worn away from it, as if its full force on the contrary

Digitized by Google

amounted to inward congestion. What the term essentially signified was in the oddest way a question at once enormous and irrelevant; what it might *show* as signifying, what it was in the circumstances actively and most probably going to, seemed rather the true consideration, indicated with all the weight of the evidence scattered about. Just the fixed *look* of England under the August sky, what was this but the most vivid exhibition of character conceivable and the face turned up, to repeat my expression, with a frankness that really left no further inquiry to be made? That appearance was of the exempt state, the record of the long safe centuries, in its happiest form, and even if any shade of happiness at such an hour might well seem a sign of profanity or perversity. To *that* there were all sorts of things to say, I could at once reflect, however; wouldn't it be the thing supremely in character that England should look most complacently herself, irradiating all her reasons for it, at the very crisis of the question of the true toughness, in other words the further

Digitized by Google

duration, of her identity? 'I might observe, as for that matter I repeatedly and unspeakably did while the two months lasted, that she was pouring forth this identity, as atmosphere and aspect and picture, in the very measure and to the very top of her consciousness of how it hung in the balance. Thus one arrived, through the succession of shining days, at the finest sense of the case—the interesting truth that her consciously not being as her tragic sisters were in the great particular was virtually just her genius, and that the very straightest thing she could do would naturally be not to flinch at the dark hour from any profession of her genius. Looking myself more askance at the dark hour (politically speaking I mean) than I after my fashion figured her as doing in her mass, I found it of an extreme, of quite an endless fascination to trace as many as possible of her felt idiosyncrasies back to her settled sea-confidence, and to see this now in turn account for so many other things, the smallest as well as the biggest, that, to give the fewest hints of illustration, the mere spread of the

Digitized by Google

great trees, the mere gathers in the little bluey-white curtains of the cottage windows, the mere curl of the tinted smoke from the old chimneys matching that note, became a sort of exquisite evidence.

Exquisite evidence of a like general class, it was true, didn't on the other side of the Channel prevent the awful liability to the reach of attack —its having borne fruit and been corrected or averted again was in fact what half the foreign picture meant; but the foreign genius was the other, other at almost every point; it had always in the past and on the spot, one remembered, expressed things, confessed things, with a difference, and part of that difference was of course the difference of history: the fact of exemption, as I have called it, the fact that a blest inviolacy was almost exactly what had least flourished. France and Belgium, to refer only to them, became dear accordingly, in the light I speak of, because, having suffered and suffered, they were suffering yet again, while precisely the opposite process worked for

Digitized by Google

the scene directly beneath my eyes. England was interesting, to put it mildly—which is but a shy evasion of putting it passionately—because she hadn't suffered, because there were passages of that sort she had publicly declined and defied; at the same time that one wouldn't have the case so simple as to set it down wholly to her luck. France and Belgium, for the past, confessed, to repeat my term; while England, so consistently harmonised, with all her long unbrokenness thick and rich upon her, seemed never to do that, nor to need it, in order to practise on a certain fine critical, not to mention a certain fine prejudiced, sensibility. It was the season of sensibility now, at any rate for just those days and just that poor place of yearning, of merely yearning, vigil; and I may add with all emphasis that never had I had occasion so to learn how far sensibility may go when once well wound up. It was saying little to say I did justice easiest at once and promptest to the most advertised proposal of the enemy, his rank intention of clapping down the spiked helmet,

Digitized by Google

than which no form of headgear, by the way, had ever struck one as of a more graceless, a more tell-tale platitude, upon the priceless genius of France; far from new, after all, was that measure of the final death in him of the saving sense of proportion which only gross dementia can abolish. Those of my generation who could remember the detected and frustrated purpose of a renewed Germanic pounce upon the country which, all but bled to death in 1871, had become capable within five years of the most penetrating irony of revival ever recorded, were well aware of how in that at once sinister and grotesque connection they had felt notified in time. It was the extension of the programme and its still more prodigious publication during the quarter of a century of interval, it was the announced application of the extinguisher to the quite other, the really so contrasted genius the expression of which surrounded me in the manner I have glanced at, it was the extraordinary fact of a declared non-sufferance any longer, on Germany's part, of either of the obnoxious national

Digitized by Google

forms disfiguring her westward horizon, and even though by her own allowance they had nothing intellectually or socially in common save that they were objectionable and, as an incident, crushable—it was this, I say, that gave one furiously to think, or rather, while one thanked one's stars for the luxury, furiously and all but unutterably to feel.

The beauty and the interest, the now more than ever copious and welcome expression, of the aspects nearest me found their value in their being so resistingly, just to that very degree of eccentricity, with that very density of home-grownness, what they were; in the same way as the character of the sister-land lately joined in sisterhood showed for exquisite because so ingrained and incorrigible, so beautifully all her own and inimitable on other ground. If it would have been hard really to give the measure of one's dismay at the awful proposition of a world squeezed together in the huge Prussian fist and with the variety and spontaneity of its parts oozing in a steady trickle, like the sacred

Digitized by Google

blood of sacrifice, between those hideous knuckly fingers, so, none the less, every reason with which our preference for a better condition and a nobler fate could possibly bristle kept battering at my heart, kept, in fact, pushing into it, after the fashion of a crowd of the alarmed faithful at the door of a church. The effect was literally, yes, as of the occasion of some great religious service, with prostrations and exaltations, the light of a thousand candles and the sound of soaring choirs —all of which figured one's individual inward state as determined by the menace. One could still note at the same time, however, that this high pitch of private emotion was by itself far from meeting the case as the enemy presented it; what I wanted, of course, to do was to meet it with the last lucidity, the fullest support for particular defensive pleas or claims—and this even if what most underlay all such without exception came back to my actual vision, that and no more, of the general sense of the land. The vision was fed, and fed to such a tune that in the quest for reasons

Digitized by Google

—that is, for the particulars of one's affection, the more detailed the better—the blades of grass, the outlines of leaves, the drift of clouds, the streaks of mortar between old bricks, not to speak of the call of child-voices muffled in the comforting air, became, as I have noted, with a hundred other like touches, casually felt, extraordinary admonitions and symbols, close links of a tangible chain. When once the question fairly hung there of the possibility, more showily set forth than it had up to then presumed to be, of a world without use for the tradition so embodied, an order substituting for this, by an unmannerly thrust, quite another and really, it would seem, quite a ridiculous, a crudely and clumsily improvised story, we might all have resembled together a group of children at their nurse's knee disconcerted by some tale that it isn't their habit to hear. We loved the old tale, or at least I did, exactly because I knew it; which leaves me keen to make the point, none the less, that my appreciation of the case for world-variety found the deeply and blessedly familiar perfectly

Digitized by Google

consistent with it. This came of what I 'read into' the familiar; and of what I did so read, of what I kept reading through that uplifted time, these remarks were to have attempted a record that has reached its limit sooner than I had hoped.

I was not then to the manner born, but my apprehension of what it was on the part of others to be so had been confirmed and enriched by the long years, and I gave myself up to the general, the native image I thus circled around as to the dearest and most precious of all native images. That verily became at the crisis an occupation sublime; which was not, after all, so much an earnest study or fond arrangement of the mixed aspects as a positive, a fairly sensual bask in their light, too kindled and too rich not to pour out by its own force. The strength and the copious play of the appearances acting in this collective fashion carried everything before them; no dark discrimination, no stiff little reserve that one might ever have made, stood up in the diffused day for a moment. It was in the opposite way, the most

Digitized by Google

opposite possible, that one's intelligence worked, all along the line; so that with the warmth of the mere sensation that 'they' were about as good, above all when it came to the stress, as could well be expected of people, there was the acute interest of the successive points at which one recognised why. This last, the satisfaction of the deepened intelligence, turned, I may frankly say, to a prolonged revel—'they' being the people about me and every comfort I had ever had of them smiling its individual smile straight at me and conducing to an effect of candour that is beyond any close notation. They didn't know how good they were, and their candour had a peculiar lovability of unconsciousness; one had more imagination at their service in this cause than they had in almost any cause of their own; it was wonderful, it was beautiful, it was inscrutable, that they could make one feel this and yet not feel with it that it at all practically diminished them. Of course, if a shade should come on occasion to fall across the picture, that shade would perhaps be the question whether

Digitized by Google

the most restless of the faculties mightn't on the whole too much fail them. It beautified life, I duly remembered, it promoted art, it inspired faith, it crowned conversation, but hadn't it—always again under stress—still finer applications than these, and mightn't it in a word, taking the right direction, peculiarly conduce to virtue? Wouldn't it, indeed, be indispensable to virtue of the highest strain? Never mind, at any rate—so my emotion replied; with it or without it we seemed to *be* taking the right direction; moreover, the next best thing to the imagination people may have, if they can, is the quantity of it they may set going in others, and which, imperfectly aware, they are just exposed to from such others, and must make the best of: their advantage becoming simply that it works, for the connection, all in their favour. That of the associated outsider, the order of whose feelings, for the occasion, I have doubtless not given a wholly lucid sketch of, cultivated its opportunity week after week at such a rate that, technical alien as he was, the privilege of the great

Digitized by Google

partaking, of shared instincts and ideals, of a communion of race and tongue, temper and tradition, put on before all the blest appearances a splendour to which I hoped that so long as I might yet live my eyes would never grow dim. And the great intensity, the melting together of the spiritual sources so loosed in a really intoxicating draught, was when I shifted my watch from near east to far west and caught the enemy, who seemed ubiquitous, in the long-observed effort that most fastened on him the insolence of his dream and the depth of his delusion. There in the west were those of my own fond fellowship, the other, the ready and rallying partakers, and it was on the treasure of our whole unquenchable association that in the riot of his ignorance—this at least apparently armour-proof—he had laid his unholy hands.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

REFUGEES IN CHELSEA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

REFUGEES IN CHELSEA

THIS is not a Report on our so interesting and inspiring Chelsea work, since November last, in aid of the Belgians driven thither from their country by a violence of unprovoked invasion and ravage more appalling than has ever before overtaken a peaceful and industrious people; it is the simple statement of a neighbour and an observer deeply affected by the most tragic exhibition of national and civil prosperity and felicity suddenly subjected to bewildering outrage that it would have been possible to conceive. The case, as the generous American communities have shown they well understand, has had no analogue in the experience of our modern generations, no matter how far back we go; it has been recognised, in surpassing practical ways, as virtually the greatest public horror of our age, or of all the preceding; and

Digitized by Google

one gratefully feels, in presence of so much done in direct mitigation of it, that its appeal to the pity and the indignation of the civilised world anticipated and transcended from the first all superfluity of argument. We live into—that is, we learn to cultivate—possibilities of sympathy and reaches of beneficence very much as the stricken and suffering themselves live into their dreadful history and explore and reveal its extent; and this admirable truth it is that unceasingly pleads with the intelligent, the fortunate, and the exempt, not to consent in advance to any dull limitation of the helpful idea. The American people have surely a genius, of the most eminent kind, for withholding any such consent and despising all such limits; and there is doubtless no remarked connection in which they have so shown the sympathetic imagination in free and fearless activity—that is, in high originality—as under the suggestion of the tragedy of Belgium.

I have small warrant perhaps to say that atmospheres are communicable; but I can testify at

Digitized by Google

least that they are breathable on the spot, to whatever effect of depression or of cheer; and I should go far, I feel, were I to attempt to register the full bitter-sweet taste, by our Chelsea water-side, all these months, of the refugee element in our vital medium. (The sweet, as I strain a point perhaps to call it, inheres, to whatever distinguishability, in our hope of having really done something, verily done much; the bitter ineradicably seasons the consciousness, hopes and demonstrations and fond presumptions and all.) I need go no further, none the less, than the makeshift provisional gates of Crosby Hall, marvellous monument transplanted a few years since from the Bishopsgate quarter of the City to a part of the ancient suburban site of the garden of Sir Thomas More, and now serving with extraordinary beneficence as the most splendid of shelters for the homeless. This great private structure, though of the grandest civic character, dating from the fifteenth century, and one of the noblest relics of the past that London could show, was held a few years back so to cumber the precious

Digitized by Google

acre or more on which it stood that it was taken to pieces in the candid commercial interest and in order that the site it had so long sanctified should be converted to such uses as would stuff out still further the ideal number of private pockets. Dismay and disgust were unable to save it; the most that could be done was to gather in with tenderness of care its innumerable constituent parts and convey them into safer conditions, where a sad defeated piety has been able to re-edify them into some semblance of the original majesty. Strange withal some of the turns of the whirligig of time; the priceless structure came down to the sound of lamentation, not to say of execration, and of the gnashing of teeth, and went up again before cold and disbelieving, quite despairing, eyes; in spite of which history appears to have decided once more to cherish it and give a new consecration. It is, in truth, still magnificent; it lives again for our gratitude in its noblest particulars; and the almost incomparable roof has arched all this winter and spring over a scene

Digitized by Google

probably more interesting and certainly more pathetic than any that have ever drawn down its ancient far-off blessing.

The place has formed, then, the headquarters of the Chelsea circle of hospitality to the exiled, the broken, and the bewildered; and if I may speak of having taken home the lesson of their state and the sense of their story, it is by meeting them in the finest club conditions conceivable that I have been able to do so. Hither, month after month and day after day, the unfortunates have flocked, each afternoon; and here the comparatively exempt, almost ashamed of their exemption in presence of so much woe, have made them welcome to every form of succour and reassurance. Certain afternoons each week have worn the character of the huge comprehensive tea-party, a fresh well-wisher discharging the social and financial cost of the fresh occasion—which has always festally profited, in addition, by the extraordinary command of musical accomplishment, the high standard of execution, that is the mark

Digitized by Google

of the Belgian people. This exhibition of our splendid local resource has rested, of course, on a multitude of other resources, still local, but of a more intimate hospitality, little by little worked out and applied, and into the details of which I may not here pretend to go beyond noting that they have been accountable for the large housed and fed and clothed and generally protected and administered numbers, all provided for in Chelsea and its outer fringe, on which our scheme of sociability at Crosby Hall itself has up to now been able to draw. To have seen this scheme so long in operation has been to find it suggest many reflections, all of the most poignant and moving order; the foremost of which has, perhaps, had for its subject that never before can the wanton hand of history have descended upon a group of communities less expectant of public violence from without or less prepared for it and attuned to it.

The bewildered and amazed passivity of the Flemish civil population, the state as of people

Digitized by Google

surprised by sudden ruffians, murderers, and thieves in the dead of night and hurled out, terrified and half clad, snatching at the few scant household gods nearest at hand, into a darkness mitigated but by flaring incendiary torches—this has been the experience stamped on our scores and scores of thousands, whose testimony to suffering, dismay, and despoilment silence alone, the silence of vain uncontributive wonderment, has for the most part been able to express. Never was such a revelation of a deeply domestic, a rootedly domiciled and instinctively and separately clustered people, a mass of communities for which the sight of the home violated, the objects helping to form it profaned, and the cohesive family, the Belgian ideal of the constituted life, dismembered, disembowelled, and shattered, had so supremely to represent the crack of doom and the end of everything. There have been days and days when under this particular impression the mere aspect and manner of our serried recipients of relief, something vague and inarticulate as in persons who have

Digitized by Google

given up everything but patience and are living, from hour to hour, but in the immediate and the unexplained, has put on such a pathos as to make the heart sick. One has had just to translate any seated row of figures, thankful for warmth and light and covering, for sustenance and human words and human looks, into terms that would exemplify some like exiled and huddled and charity-fed predicament for our superior selves, to feel our exposure to such a fate, our submission to it, our holding in the least together under it, darkly unthinkable. Dim imaginations would at such moments interpose, a confused theory that even at the worst our adventurous habits, our imperial traditions, our general defiance of the superstition of domesticity, would dash from our lips the cup of bitterness; from these it was at all events impossible not to come back to the consciousness that almost every creature there collected was indebted to our good offices for the means to come at all. I thought of our parents and children, our brothers and sisters, aligned in borrowed

Digitized by Google

garments and settled to an as yet undetermined future of eleemosynary tea and buns, and I ask myself, doubtless to little purpose, either what grace of resignation or what clamour of protest we should, beneath the same star, be noted as substituting for the inveterate Belgian decency.

I can only profess at once that the sense of this last round about one was, at certain hours when the music and the chant of consolation rose in the stillness from our improvised stage at the end of the great hall, a thing to cloud with tears any pair of eyes lifted to our sublime saved roof in thanks for its vast comprehension. Questions of exhibited type, questions as to a range of form and tradition, a measure of sensibility and activity, not our own, dwindled and died before the gross fact of our having here an example of such a world-tragedy as we supposed Europe had outlived, and that nothing at all therefore mattered but that we should bravely and handsomely hold up our quite heavy enough end of it. It is because we have responded in this degree to the call unprecedented

Digitized by Google

that we are, in common with a vast number of organisations scattered through these islands, qualified to claim that no small part of the inspiration to our enormous act of welcome resides in the moral interest it yields. One can indeed be certain of such a source of profit but in the degree in which one has found oneself personally drawing upon it; yet it is obvious that we are not treated every day to the disclosure of a national character, a national temperament and type, confined for the time to their plainest and stoutest features and set, on a prodigious scale, in all the relief that the strongest alien air and alien conditions can give them. Great salience, in such a case, do all collective idiosyncrasies acquire—upon the fullest enumeration of which, however, as the Belgian instance and the British atmosphere combine to represent them, I may not now embark, prepossessed wholly as I am with the more generally significant social stamp and human aspect so revealed, and with the quality derived from these things by the multiplied examples that help us

Digitized by Google

to take them in. This feeling that our visitors illustrate above all the close and comfortable household life, with every implication of a seated and saturated practice of it, practice of the intimate and private and personal, the securely sensual and genial arts that flow from it, has been by itself the key to a plenitude of observation and in particular to as much friendly searching insight as one could desire to enjoy.

The moving, the lacerating thing is the fashion after which such a reading of the native elements, once adopted, has been as a light flaring into every obscurest retreat, as well as upon any puzzling ambiguity, of the state of shock of the national character under the infamy of the outrage put upon it. That *they*, of all people the most given over to local and patriarchal beatitude among the admirable and the cherished objects handed down to them by their so interesting history on every spot where its action has been thickest—that is, on every inch, so to speak, of their teeming territory—should find themselves identified with

Digitized by Google

the most shamelessly cynical public act of which the civilised world at this hour retains the memory, is a fact truly representing the exquisite in the horrible; so peculiarly addressed has been their fate to the desecration of ideals that had fairly become breath of their lungs and flesh of their flesh. Oh, the installed and ensconced, the immemorially edified and arranged, the thoroughly furnished and provided and nourished people!—not in the least besotted or relaxed in their security and density, like the self-smothered society of the ancient world upon which the earlier Huns and Vandals poured down, but candidly complacent and admirably intelligent in their care for their living tradition, and only so off their guard as to have consciously set the example of this care to all such as had once smoked with them their wondrous pipe of peace. Almost any posture of stupefaction would have been conceivable in the shaken victims of this delusion: I can speak best, however, but of what I have already glanced at, that temperamental weight of their fall which

Digitized by Google

has again and again, at sight of many of them gathered together, made the considering heart as heavy for them as if it, too, had for the time been worsted.

However, it would take me far to tell of half the penetrating admonitions, whether of the dazed or of the roused appearance, that have for so long almost in like degree made our attention ache. I think of particular faces, in the whole connection, when I want most to remember—since to remember always, and never, never to forget, is a prescription shining before us like a possible light of dawn—faces saying such things in their silence, or in their speech of quite different matters, as to make the only thinkable comment or response some word or some gesture of reprieve to dumb or to dissimulated anguish. Blest be the power that has given to civilised men the appreciation of the face —such an immeasurable sphere of exercise for it has this monstrous trial of the peoples come to supply. Such histories, such a record of moral experience, of emotion convulsively suppressed,

Digitized by Google

as one meets in some of them: and this even if, on the whole, one has been able to think of these special allies, all sustainingly, much rather as the sturdiest than as the most demonstrative of sufferers. I have in these rapid remarks to reduce my many impressions to the fewest, but must even thus spare one of them for commemoration of the admirable cast of working countenance we are rewarded by the sight of, wherever we turn amid the quantity of helpful service and all the fruitful industries that we have been able to start and that keep themselves going. These are the lights in the picture; and who indeed would wish that the lights themselves should be anything less than tragic? The strong young man (no young men are familiarly stronger,) mutilated, amputated, dismembered in penalty for their defence of their soil against the horde, and now engaged at Crosby Hall in the making of handloom socks, to whom I pay an occasional visit—much more for my own cheer, I apprehend, than for theirs—express so in their honest concentration under difficulties

Digitized by Google

the actual and general value of their people that just to be in their presence is a blest renewal of faith. Excellent, exemplary, is this manly, homely, handy type, grave in its somewhat strained attention, but at once lighted to the briefest, sincerest humour of protest by any direct reference to the general cruelty of its misfortune. Anything but unsuggestive, the range of the 'quiet' physiognomy, when one feels the consciousness behind it not to have run thin. Thick and strong is the good Flemish sense of life and all its functions—which fact is responsible for no empty and really unmodelled 'mug.'

I am afraid at the same time that, if the various ways of being bad are beyond our reckoning, the condition and the action of exemplary goodness tend rather to reduce to a certain rich unity of appearance those marked by them, however dissociated from each other such persons may have been by race and education. Otherwise what tribute shouldn't I be moved to pay to the gentleman of Flanders to whom the specially improvised

Digitized by Google

craftsmen I have just mentioned owe their training and their inspiration? through *his* having, in his proscribed and denuded state, mastered the craft in order to recruit them to it, and, in fine, so far as my observation has been concerned, exhibit clear human virtue, courage and patience and the humility of sought fellowship in privation, with an unconscious beauty that I should be ashamed in this connection not to have noted publicly. I scarce know what such a 'personality' as his suggests to me if not that we had all, on our good Chelsea ground, best take up and cherish as directly and intimately as possible every scrap of our community with our gentleman of Flanders. I make such a point as this, at the same time, only to remember how, almost wherever I have tried sustainingly to turn, my imagination and my intelligence have been quickened, and to recognise in particular, for that matter, that this couldn't possibly be more the case for them than in visiting a certain hostel in one of our comparatively contracted but amply decent local squares

Digitized by Google

—riverside Chelsea having, of course, its own urban identity in the multitudinous County of London: which, in itself as happy an example, doubtless, of the hostel smoothly working as one need cite, placed me in grateful relation with a lady, one of the victims of her country's convulsion and in charge of the establishment I allude to, whom simply to 'meet,' as we say, is to learn how singular a dignity, how clear a distinction, may shine in active fortitude and economic self-effacement under an all but crushing catastrophe. 'Talk about faces——!' I could but privately ejaculate as I gathered the sense of all that this one represented in the way of natural nobleness and sweetness, a whole past acquaintance with letters and art and taste, insisting on their present restrictedness to bare sisterly service.

The proud rigour of association with pressing service alone, with absolutely nothing else, the bare commodious house, so otherwise known to me of old and now—like most of our hostels, if I am not mistaken, the most unconditioned of loans

Digitized by Google

from its relinquishing owner—the lingering look of ancient peace in the precincts, an element I had already, as I passed and repassed at the afternoon hour, found somehow not at all dispelled by the presence in the central green garden itself of sundry maimed and hobbling and smiling convalescents from an extemporised small hospital close at hand, their battered khaki replaced by a like uniformity of the loose light blue, and friendly talk with them through the rails of their enclosure as blest to one participant at least as friendly talk with them always and everywhere is: such were the hovering elements of an impression in which the mind had yet mainly to yield to that haunting force on the part of our waiting proscripts which never consents to be long denied. The proof of which universally recognised power of their spell amid us is indeed that they have led me so far with a whole side of my plea for them still unspoken. This, however, I hope on another occasion to come back to; and I am caught meanwhile by my memory of how the note of this conviction was struck for me, with

Digitized by Google

extraordinary force, many months ago and in the first flush of recognition of what the fate that had overtaken our earliest tides of arrival and appeal really meant—meant so that all fuller acquaintance, since pursued, has but piled one congruous reality after another upon the horror.

It was in September, in a tiny Sussex town which I had not quitted since the outbreak of the war, and where the advent of our first handful of fugitives before the warning of Louvain and Aerschoot and Termonde and Dinant had just been announced. Our small hill-top city, covering the steep sides of the compact pedestal crowned by its great church, had reserved a refuge at its highest point; and we had waited all day, from occasional train to train, for the moment at which we should attest our hospitality. It came at last, but late in the evening, when a vague outside rumour called me to my doorstep, where the unforgettable impression at once assaulted me. Up the precipitous little street that led from the station, over the old grass-grown cobbles where

Digitized by Google

vehicles rarely pass, came the panting procession of the homeless and their comforting, their almost clinging entertainers, who seemed to hurry them on as in a sort of overflow of expression of the fever of charity. It was swift and eager, in the autumn darkness and under the flare of a single lamp—with no vociferation and, but for a woman's voice, scarce a sound save the shuffle of mounting feet and the thick-drawn breath of emotion. The note I except, however, was that of a young mother carrying her small child and surrounded by those who bore her on and on, almost lifting her as they went together. The resonance through our immemorial old street of her sobbing and sobbing cry was the voice itself of history; it brought home to me more things than I could then quite take the measure of, and these just because it expressed for her not direct anguish, but the incredibility, as who should say, of honest assured protection. Months have elapsed, and from having been then one of a few hundred she is now one of scores and scores of thousands: yet her cry is

Digitized by Google

still in my ears, whether to speak most of what she had lately or of what she actually felt; and it plays, to my own sense, as a great fitful, tragic light over the dark exposure of her people.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE AMERICAN VOLUNTEER MOTOR-AMBULANCE CORPS IN FRANCE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE AMERICAN VOLUNTEER MOTOR-AMBULANCE CORPS IN FRANCE

A Letter to the Editor of an American Journal

SIR,—Several of us Americans in London are so interested in the excellent work of this body, lately organised by Mr Richard Norton and now in active operation at the rear of a considerable part of the longest line of battle known to history, that I have undertaken to express to you our common conviction that our countrymen at home will share our interest and respond to such particulars as we are by this time able to give. The idea of the admirable enterprise was suggested to Mr Norton when, early in the course of the War, he saw at the American Hospital at Neuilly scores of cases of French and British wounded whose lives were lost, or who must incur life-

Digitized by Google

long disability and suffering, through the long delay of their removal from the field of battle. To help energetically to remedy this dire fact struck him at once as possible, and his application of energy was so immediate and effective that in just three weeks after his return to London to take the work in hand he had been joined by a number of his countrymen and of others possessed of cars, who had offered them as ambulances already fitted or easily convertible, and had not less promptly offered themselves as capable chauffeurs. To this promptly gathered equipment, the recruiting of which no red tape had hampered and no postponement to committee-meetings had delayed, were at once added certain other cars of purchase—these made possible by funds rapidly received from many known and unknown friends in America. The fleet so collected amounted to some fifteen cars. To the service of the British Red Cross and that of the St John Ambulance it then addressed itself, gratefully welcomed, and enjoying from that moment the valuable association

Digitized by Google

of Colonel A. J. Barry of the British Army, who was already employed in part on behalf of the Red Cross. I have within a few days had the opportunity to learn from this zealous and accomplished coadjutor, as well as from Mr Norton himself, some of the particulars of their comprehensive activity, they each having been able to dash over to London for a visit of the briefest duration. It has thus been brought home to me how much the success of the good work depends on American generosity both in the personal and the pecuniary way—exercised, that is, by the contribution of cars, to which personal service, that of their contributors, attaches itself, and of course by such gifts of money as shall make the Corps more and more worthy of its function and of the American name.

Its function is primarily that of gathering in the wounded, and those disabled by illness (though the question is almost always of the former,) from the *postes de secours* and the field hospitals, the various nearest points to the Front, bestrewn

Digitized by Google

with patient victims, to which a motor-car can workably penetrate, and conveying them to the base hospitals, and when necessary the railway stations, from which they may be further directed upon places of care, centres of those possibilities of recovery which the splendid recent extension of surgical and medical science causes more and more to preponderate. The great and blessed fact is that conditions of recovery are largely secured by the promptitude and celerity that motor-transport offers, as compared with railway services at the mercy of constant interruption and arrest, in the case of bad and already neglected wounds, those aggravated by exposure and delay, the long lying on the poisonous field before the blest regimental *brancardiers* or stretcher-bearers, waiting for the shelter of night, but full also of their own strain of pluck, can come and remove them. Carried mostly by rude arts, a mercy much hindered at the best, to the shelter, often hastily improvised, at which first aid becomes possible for them, they are there, as immediately and tenderly as possible,

Digitized by Google

stowed in our waiting or arriving cars, each of which receives as large a number as may be consistent with the particular suffering state of the stricken individual. Some of these are able to sit, at whatever cost from the inevitable shake over rough country roads; for others the lying posture only is thinkable, and the ideal car is the one which may humanely accommodate three men outstretched and four or five seated. Three outstretched is sometimes a tight fit, but when this is impossible the gain in poor *blessés assis* is the greater—wedged together though broken shoulder or smashed arm may have to be with a like shrinking and shuddering neighbour. The moral of these rigours is of course that the more numerous the rescuing vehicles the less inevitable the sore crowding. I find it difficult to express to you the sense of practical human pity, as well as the image of general helpful energy, applied in innumerable chance ways, that we get from the report of what the Corps has done, and holds itself in readiness to do, thanks to the admirable spirit

Digitized by Google

of devotion without stint, of really passionate work, animating its individual members. These have been found beneficently and inexhaustibly active, it is interesting to be able to note, in proportion as they possess the general *educated* intelligence, the cultivated tradition of tact, and I may perhaps be allowed to confess that, for myself, I find a positive added beauty in the fact that the unpaid chauffeur, the wise amateur driver and ready lifter, helper, healer, and, so far as may be, consoler, is apt to be a University man and acquainted with other pursuits. One gets the sense that the labour, with its multiplied incidents and opportunities, is just unlimitedly inspiring to the keen spirit or the sympathetic soul, the recruit with energies and resources on hand that plead with him for the beauty of the vivid and palpable social result

Not the least of the good offices open to our helpers are the odds and ends of aid determined by wayside encounters in a ravaged country, where distracted women and children flee from threatened or invaded villages, to be taken up, to

Digitized by Google

be given the invaluable lift, if possible, in all the incoherence of their alarm and misery; sometimes with the elder men mixed in the tragic procession, tragi-comic even, very nearly, when the domestic or household objects they have snatched up in their headlong exodus, and are solemnly encumbered with, bear the oddest misproportion to the gravity of the case. They are hurried in, if the car be happily free, and carried on to comparative safety, but with the admirable cleverness and courage of the Frenchwoman of whatever class essentially in evidence in whatever contact; never more so, for instance, than when a rude field hospital has had of a sudden to be knocked together in the poor schoolhouse of a village, and the mangled and lacerated, brought into it on stretchers or on any rough handcart or trundled barrow that has been impressed into the service, have found the *villageoises*, bereft of their men, full of the bravest instinctive alertness, not wincing at sights of horror fit to try even trained sensibilities, handling shattered remnants of humanity with an art as

Digitized by Google

extemporised as the refuge itself, and having each precarious charge ready for the expert transfer by the time the car has hurried up. Emphasised enough by the ceaseless thunder of the Front the quality of the French and the British resistance and the pitch of their spirit; but one feels what is meant none the less when one hears the variety of heroism and the brightness of devotion in the women over all the region of battle described from observation as unsurpassable. Do we take too much for granted in imagining that this offered intimacy of appreciation of such finest aspects of the admirable immortal France, and of a relation with them almost as illuminating to ourselves as beneficent to them, may itself rank as something of an appeal where the seeds of response to her magnificent struggle in the eye of our free longings and liberal impulses already exist?

I should mention that a particular great Army Corps, on the arrival of our first cars on the scene, appealed to them for all the service they could render, and that to this Corps they have been as

Digitized by Google

yet uninterruptedly attached, on the condition of a reserve of freedom to respond at once to any British invitation to a transfer of activity. Such an assurance had already been given the Commissioner for the British Red Cross, on the part of Mr Norton and Colonel Barry, with their arrival at Boulogne, where that body cordially welcomed them, and whence in fact, on its request, a four-stretcher-car, with its American owner and another of our Volunteers in charge, proceeded to work for a fortnight, night and day, along the firing line on the Belgian frontier. Otherwise we have continuously enjoyed, in large, defined limits, up to the present writing, an association with one of the most tremendously engaged French Armies. The length of its line alone, were I to state it here in kilometres, would give some measure of the prodigious fighting stretch across what is practically the whole breadth of France, and it is in relation to a fraction of the former Front that we have worked. Very quickly, I may mention, we found one of our liveliest opportunities, Mr Norton and

Digitized by Google

Colonel Barry proceeding together to ascertain what had become of one of the field hospitals known to have served in a small assaulted town a few days before, when, during a bombardment, Colonel Barry had saved many lives. Just as our Volunteers arrived a fresh bombardment began, and though assured by the fleeing inhabitants, including the mayor of the place, who was perhaps a trifle over-responsibly in advance of them, that there were no wounded left behind—as in fact proved to be the case—we nevertheless pushed on for full assurance. There were then no wounded to bring out, but it was our first happy chance of bearing away all the hopeless and helpless women and children we could carry. This was a less complicated matter, however, than that of one of Colonel Barry's particular reminiscences, an occasion when the Germans were advancing on a small place that it was clear they would take, and when pressing news came to him of 400 wounded in it, who were to be got out if humanly possible. They were got out and motored away—though

Digitized by Google

it took the rescuing party thus three days, in the face of their difficulties and dangers, to effect the blest clearance. It may be imagined how precious in such conditions the power of the chauffeur-driven vehicle becomes, though indeed I believe the more special moral of this transaction, as given, was in the happy fact that the squad had blessedly been able to bring and keep with it four doctors, whose immediate service on the spot and during transport was the means of saving very many lives. The moral of that in turn would seem to be that the very ideal for the general case is the not so inconceivable volunteer who should be an ardent and gallant and not otherwise too much preoccupied young doctor with the possession of a car and the ability to drive it, above all the ability to offer it, as his crowning attribute. Perhaps I sketch in such terms a slightly fantastic figure, but there is so much of strenuous suggestion, which withal manages at the same time to be romantic, in the information before me, that it simply multiplies, for the hopeful mind, the

Digitized by Google

possibilities and felicities of equipped good-will. An association of the grimmest reality clings at the same time, I am obliged to add, to the record of success I have just cited—the very last word of which seems to have been that in one of the houses of the little distracted town were two French Sisters of Mercy who were in charge of an old bedridden lady and whom, with the object of their care, every effort was made in vain to remove. They absolutely declined all such interference with the fate God had appointed them to meet as nuns—if it was His will to make them martyrs. The curtain drops upon what became of them, but they too illustrate in their way the range of the Frenchwoman's power to face the situation.

Still another form of high usefulness comes to our Corps, I should finally mention, in its opportunities for tracing the whereabouts and recovering the identity of the dead, the English dead, named in those grim lists, supplied to them by the military authorities, which their intercourse with the people in a given area where fighting has occurred enables

Digitized by Google

them often blessedly to clear up. Their pervasiveness, their ubiquity, keeps them in touch with the people, witnesses of what happens on the battle-swept area when, after the storm has moved on, certain of the lifeless sweepings are gathered up. Old villagers, searched out and questioned, testify and give a clue through which the whereabouts of the committal to thin earth of the last mortality of this, that, or the other of the obscurely fallen comes as a kind of irony of relief to those waiting in suspense. This uncertainty had attached itself for weeks to the fate in particular of many of the men concerned in the already so historic retreat of the Allies from Mons—ground still considerably in the hands of the Germans, but also gradually accessible and where, as quickly as it becomes so, Colonel Barry pushes out into it in search of information. Sternly touching are such notes of general indication, information from the Curé, the village carpenter, the grave-digger of the place, a man called so-and-so and a gentleman called something else, as to the burial of forty-five dead

Digitized by Google

English in the public cemetery of such and such a small locality, as to the interment somewhere else of 'an Englishman believed to be an officer,' as to a hundred English surprised in a certain church and killed all but forty, and buried, as is not always their fortune for their kindred, without removal of their discs of identification. Among such like data we move when not among those of a more immediate violence, and all to be in their way scarce less considerately handled. Mixed with such gleanings one comes upon other matters of testimony of which one hopes equal note is made—testimony as to ferocities perpetrated upon the civil population which I may not here specify. Every form of assistance and inquiry takes place of course in conditions of some danger, thanks to the risk of stray bullets and shells, not infrequently met when cars operate, as they neither avoid doing nor wastefully seek to do, in proximity to the lines. The Germans, moreover, are noted as taking the view that the insignia of the Red Cross, with the implication of the precarious freight it

Digitized by Google

covers, are in all circumstances a good mark for their shots; a view characteristic of their belligerent system at large, but not more deterrent for the ministers of the adversary in this connection than in any other, when the admirable end is in question.

I have doubtless said enough, however, in illustration of the interest attaching to all this service, a service in which not one of the forces of social energy and devotion, not one of the true social qualities, sympathy, ingenuity, tact, and taste, fail to come into play. Such an exercise of them, as all the incidental possibilities are taken advantage of, represents for us all, who are happily not engaged in the huge destructive work, the play not simply of a reparatory or consolatory, but a positively productive and creative virtue in which there is a peculiar honour. We Americans are as little neutrals as possible where any aptitude for any action, of whatever kind, that affirms life and freshly and inventively exemplifies it, instead of overwhelming and undermining it, is concerned. Great is the chance, in fact, for exhibiting this as

Digitized by Google

our entirely elastic, our supremely characteristic, social aptitude. We cannot do so cheaply, indeed, any more than the opposite course is found, under whatever fatuity of presumption, inexpensive and ready-made. What I therefore invite all those whom this notice may reach to understand, as for that matter they easily will, is that the expenses of our enlightened enterprise have to be continuously met, and that if it has confidence in such support it may go on in all the alert pride and pity that need be desired. I am assured that the only criticism the members of the Corps make of it is that they wish more of their friends would come and support it either personally or financially—or, best of all, of course, both. At the moment I write I learn this invocation to have been met to the extent of Mr Norton's having within two or three days annexed five fresh cars, with their owners to work them—and all, as I hear it put with elation, 'excellent University men.' As an extremely helpful factor on the part of Volunteers is some facility in French and the goodwill to stay on for whatever

Digitized by Google

reasonable length of time, I assume the excellence of these gentlemen to include those signal merits. Most members of the Staff of thirty-four in all (as the number till lately at least has stood) have been glad to pay their own living expenses; but it is taken for granted that in cases where individuals are unable to meet that outlay indefinitely the subscribers to the Fund will not grudge its undertaking to find any valuable man in food and lodging. Such charges amount at the outside to 1 dollar 75 per day. The expenses of petrol and tyres are paid by the French Government or the British Red Cross, so that the contributor of the car is at costs only for the maintenance of his chauffeur, if he brings one, or for necessary repairs. Mr Eliot Norton, of 2 Rector Street, New York, is our recipient of donations on your side of the sea, Mr George F. Read, Hon. Treas., care of Messrs Brown, Shipley & Co., 123 Pall Mall, S.W., kindly performs this office in London, and I am faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

LONDON, *November* 25, 1914.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FRANCE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FRANCE

I THINK that if there is a general ground in the world, on which an appeal might be made, in a civilised circle, with a sense of its being uttered only to meet at once and beyond the need of insistence a certain supreme recognition and response, the idea of what France and the French mean to the educated spirit of man would be the nameable thing. It would be the cause uniting us most quickly in an act of glad intelligence, uniting us with the least need of any wondering why. We should understand and answer together just by the magic of the mention, the touch of the two or three words, and this in proportion to our feeling ourselves social and communicating creatures—to the point, in fact, of a sort of shame at any imputation of our not liberally understanding, of our waiting in any degree to be nudged or hustled.

Digitized by Google

The case of France, as one may hold it, where the perceptive social mind is concerned and set in motion, is thus only to be called exquisite—so far as we don't seem so to qualify things *down*. We certainly all feel, in the beautiful connection, in two general ways; one of these being that the spring pressed with such happy effect lifts the sense by its mere vibration into the lightest and brightest air in which, taking our world all round, it is given to our finer interest about things to breathe and move; and the other being that just having our intelligence, our experience at its freest and bravest, taken for granted, is a compliment to us, as not purely instinctive persons, which we should miss, if it were not paid, rather to the degree of finding the omission an insult.

Such, as I say, is our easy relation to the sound of a voice raised, even however allusively and casually, on behalf of that great national and social presence which has always most oppositely, most sensibly, most obsessively, as I surely may put it, and above all most dazzingly, neighboured

Digitized by Google

and admonished us here: after such a fashion as really to have made the felt breath of its life, across an interval constantly narrowing, a part of our education as distinguished from our luck. Our luck in all our past has been enormous, the greatest luck on the whole, assuredly, that any race has ever had; but it has never been a conscious reaction or a gathered fruition, as one may say; it has just been a singular felicity of position and of temperament, and this felicity has made us observe and perceive and reflect much less than it has made us directly act and profit and enjoy: enjoy of course by attending tremendously to all the business involved in our position. So far as we have had reactions, therefore, they have not sprung, when they have been at all intensified, from the extraordinary good fortune of our state. Unless indeed I may put it that what they *have* very considerably sprung from has been exactly a part of our general prodigy—the good fortune itself of our being neighboured by a native genius so different from our own, so suggestive of wondrous

Digitized by Google

and attaching comparisons, as to keep us chronically aware of the difference and the contrast and yet all the while help us to see into them and through them.

We were not, to all appearance, appointed by fate for the most perceptive and penetrative offices conceivable; so that to have over against us and within range a proposition, as we nowadays say, that could only grow more and more vivid, more and more engaging and inspiring, in the measure of our growth of criticism and curiosity, or, in other words, of the capacity just to pay attention, pay attention otherwise than by either sticking very fast at home or inquiring of the Antipodes, the Antipodes almost exclusively—what has that practically been for us but one of the very choicest phases of our luck aforesaid, one of the most appraisable of our felicities? the very one, doubtless, that our dissimilarity of temperament and taste would have most contradictiously and most correctively prescribed from the moment we were not to be left simply to stew in our juice! If the

Digitized by Google

advantage I so characterise was to be in its own way thoroughly affirmative, there was yet nothing about it to do real or injurious violence to that abysmal good nature which sometimes strikes me as our most effective contribution to human history. The vision of France, at any rate, so close and so clear at propitious hours, was to grow happily illustrational for us as nothing else in any like relation to us could possibly have become. Other families have a way, on good opportunity, of interesting us more than our own, and here was this immense acquaintance extraordinarily mattering for us and at the same time not irritating us by a single claim of cousinship or a single liberty taken on any such score. Any liberties taken were much rather liberties, I think, of ours—always abounding as we did in quite free, and perhaps slightly rough, and on the whole rather superficial, movement beyond our island circle and toward whatever lay in our path. France lay very much in our path, our path to almost everything that could beckon us forth from our base—and there were very few

Digitized by Google

things in the world or places on the globe that didn't so beckon us; according to which she helped us along on our expansive course a good deal more, doubtless, than either she or we always knew.

All of which, you see, is but a manner of making my point that her name means more than anything in the world to us but just our own. Only at present it means ever so much more, almost unspeakably more, than it has ever done in the past, and I can't help inviting you to feel with me, for a very few moments, what the real force of this association to which we now throb consists of, and why it so moves us. We enjoy generous emotions *because* they are generous, because generosity is a noble passion and a glow, because we spring with it for the time above our common pedestrian pace—and this just in proportion as all questions and doubts about it drop to the ground. But great reasons never spoil a great sympathy, and to see an inspiring object in a strong light never made any such a shade less inspiring. So, therefore, in these days when our great neighbour and Ally is before

Digitized by Google

us in a beauty that is tragic, tragic because menaced and overdarkened, the closest possible appreciation of what it is that is thereby in peril for ourselves and for the world makes the image shine with its highest brightness at the same time that the cloud upon it is made more black. When I sound the depth of my own affection so fondly excited, I take the like measure for all of us and feel the glad recognition I meet in thus putting it to you, for our full illumination, that what happens to France happens to all that part of ourselves which we are most proud, and most finely advised, to enlarge and cultivate and consecrate.

Our heroic friend sums up for us, in other words, and has always summed up, the life of the mind and the life of the senses alike, taken together, in the most irrepressible freedom of either—and, after that fashion, positively lives *for* us, carries on experience for us; does it under our tacit and our at present utterly ungrudging view of her being formed and endowed and constantly prompted, toward such doing, on all sorts of sides that are

Digitized by Google

simply so many reasons for our standing off, standing off in a sort of awed intellectual hush or social suspense, and watching and admiring and thanking her. She is sole and single in this, that she takes charge of those of the interests of man which most dispose him to fraternise with himself, to pervade all his possibilities and to taste all his faculties, and in consequence to find and to make the earth a friendlier, an easier, and especially a more various sojourn; and the great thing is the amiability and the authority, intimately combined, with which she has induced us all to trust her on this ground. There are matters as to which every set of people has of course most to trust itself, most to feel its own genius and its own stoutness —as we are here and all round about us knowing and abiding by that now as we have never done. But I verily think there has never been anything in the world—since the most golden aspect of antiquity at least—like the way in which France has been trusted to gather the rarest and fairest and sweetest fruits of our so tremendously and

Digitized by Google

so mercilessly turned-up garden of life. She has gardened where the soil of humanity has been most grateful and the aspect, so to call it, most toward the sun, and there, at the high and yet mild and fortunate centre, she has grown the precious, intimate, the nourishing, finishing things that she has inexhaustibly scattered abroad. And if we have all so taken them from her, so expected them from her as our right, to the point that she would have seemed positively to fail of a passed pledge to help us to happiness if she had disappointed us, this has been because of her treating us to the impression of genius as no nation since the Greeks has treated the watching world, and because of our feeling that genius at that intensity is infallible.

What it has all amounted to, as I say, is that we have never known otherwise an agent so beautifully organised, organised from within, for a mission, and that such an organisation at free play has made us really want never to lift a finger to break the charm. We catch at every turn of our present long-drawn crisis indeed that portentous name:

Digitized by Google

it's displayed to us on a measureless scale that our Enemy is organised, organised possibly to the effect of binding us with a spell if anything *could* keep us passive. The term has been in a manner, by that association, compromised and vulgarised: I say vulgarised because any history of organisation from without and for intended aggression and self-imposition, however elaborate the thing may be, shows for merely mechanical and bristling compared with the condition of being naturally and functionally endowed and appointed. This last is the only fair account of the complete and perfect case that France has shown us and that civilisation has depended on for half its assurances. Well, now, we have before us this boundless extension of the case, that, as we have always known what it was to see the wonderful character I speak of range through its variety and keep shining with another and still another light, so in these days we assist at what we may verily call the supreme evidence of its incomparable gift for vivid exhibition. It takes our great Ally, and her

Digitized by Google

only, to be as vivid for concentration, for reflection, for intelligent, inspired contraction of life toward an end all but smothered in sacrifice, as she has ever been for the most splendidly wasteful diffusion and communication; and to give us a view of her nature and her mind in which, laying down almost every advantage, every art and every appeal that we have generally known her by, she takes on energies, forms of collective sincerity, silent eloquence and selected example that are fresh revelations—and so, bleeding at every pore, while at no time in all her history so completely erect, makes us feel her perhaps as never before our incalculable, immortal France.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE LONG WARDS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE LONG WARDS

THERE comes back to me out of the distant past an impression of the citizen soldier at once in his collective grouping and in his impaired, his more or less war-worn state, which was to serve me for long years as the most intimate vision of him that my span of life was likely to disclose. This was a limited affair indeed, I recognise as I try to recover it, but I mention it because I was to find at the end of time that I had kept it in reserve, left it lurking deep down in my sense of things, however shyly and dimly, however confusedly even, as a term of comparison, a glimpse of something by the loss of which I should have been the poorer; such a residuary possession of the spirit, in fine, as only needed darkness to close round it a little from without in order to give forth a vague phosphorescent light. It was early, it must have

Digitized by Google

been very early, in our Civil War; yet not so early but that a large number of those who had answered President Lincoln's first call for an army had had time to put in their short period (the first term was so short then, as was likewise the first number,) and reappear again in camp, one of those of their small New England state, under what seemed to me at the hour, that of a splendid autumn afternoon, the thickest mantle of heroic history. If I speak of the impression as confused I certainly justify that mark of it by my failure to be clear at this moment as to how much they were in general the worse for wear—since they can't have been exhibited to me, through their waterside settlement of tents and improvised shanties, in anything like hospital conditions. However, I cherish the rich ambiguity, and have always cherished it, for the sake alone of the general note exhaled, the thing that has most kept remembrance unbroken. I carried away from the place *the* impression, the one that not only was never to fade, but was to show itself susceptible of extra-

Digitized by Google

ordinary eventual enrichment. I may not pretend now to refer it to the more particular sources it drew upon at that summer's end of 1861, or to say why my repatriated warriors were, if not somehow definitely stricken, so largely either lying in apparent helplessness or moving about in confessed languor: it suffices me that I have always thought of them as expressing themselves at almost every point in the minor key, and that this has been the reason of their interest. What I call the note therefore is the characteristic the most of the essence and the most inspiring—inspiring I mean for consideration of the admirable sincerity that we thus catch in the act: the note of the quite abysmal softness, the exemplary genius for accommodation, that forms the alternative aspect, the passive as distinguished from the active, of the fighting man whose business is in the first instance formidably to bristle. This aspect has been produced, I of course recognise, amid the horrors that the German powers had, up to a twelvemonth ago, been for years conspiring to let loose upon the world by

Digitized by Google

such appalling engines and agencies as mankind had never before dreamed of; but just that is the lively interest of the fact unfolded to us now on a scale beside which, and though save indeed for a single restriction, the whole previous illustration of history turns pale. Even if I catch but in a generalising blur that exhibition of the first American levies as a measure of experience had stamped and harrowed them, the signally attaching mark that I refer to is what I most recall; so that if I didn't fear, for the connection, to appear to compare the slighter things with the so much greater, the diminished shadow with the far-spread substance, I should speak of my small old scrap of truth, miserably small in contrast with the immense evidence even then to have been gathered, but in respect to which latter occasion didn't come to me, as having contained possibilities of development that I must have languished well-nigh during a lifetime to crown it with.

One had during the long interval not lacked opportunity for a vision of the soldier at peace,

Digitized by Google

moving to and fro with a professional eye on the horizon, but not fished out of the bloody welter and laid down to pant, as we actually see him among the Allies, almost on the very bank and within sound and sight of his deepest element. The effect of many of the elapsing years, the time in England and France and Italy, had indeed been to work his collective presence so closely and familiarly into any human scene pretending to a full illustration of our most generally approved conditions that I confess to having missed him rather distressfully from the picture of things offered me during a series of months spent not long ago in a few American cities after years of disconnection. I can scarce say why I missed him sadly rather than gladly—I might so easily have prefigured one's delight in his absence; but certain it is that my almost outraged consciousness of our practically doing without him amid American conditions was a revelation of the degree in which his great imaging, his great reminding and enhancing function is rooted in the European basis.

Digitized by Google

I felt his non-existence on the American positively produce a void which nothing else, as a vivifying substitute, hurried forward to fill; this being indeed the case with many of the other voids, the most aching, which left the habituated eye to cast about as for something to nibble in a state of dearth. We never know, I think, how much these wanting elements have to suggest to the pampered mind till we feel it living in view of the community from which they have been simplified away. On these occasions they conspire with the effect of certain other, certain similar expressions, examples of social life proceeding as by the serene, the possibly too serene, process of mere ignorance, to bring to a head for the fond observer the wonder of what is supposed to strike, for the projection of a finished world, the note that they are not there to strike. However, as I quite grant the hypothesis of an observer still fond and yet remarking the lapse of the purple patch of militarism but with a joy unclouded, I limit myself to the merely personal point that the fancy of a particular

Digitized by Google

brooding analyst *could* so sharply suffer from a vagueness of privation, something like an unseasoned observational diet, and then, rather to his relief, find the mystery cleared up. And the strict relevancy of the bewilderment I glance at, moreover, becomes questionable, further, by reason of my having, with the outbreak of the horrors in which we are actually steeped, caught myself staring at the exhibited militarism of the general British scene not much less ruefully than I could remember to have stared, a little before, at the utter American deficit. Which proves after all that the rigour of the case had begun at a bound to defy the largest luxury of thought; so that the presence of the military in the picture on the mere moderate insular scale struck one as 'furnishing' a menaced order but in a pitiful and pathetic degree.

The degree was to alter, however, by swift shades, just as one's comprehension of the change grew and grew with it; and thus it was that, to cut short the record of our steps and stages, we

Digitized by Google

have left immeasurably behind us here the question of what might or what should have been. That belonged, with whatever beguiled or amused ways of looking at it, to the abyss of our past delusion, a collective state of mind in which it had literally been possible to certain sophists to argue that, so far from not having soldiers enough, we had more than we were likely to know any respectable public call for. It was in the very fewest weeks that we replaced a pettifogging consciousness by the most splendidly liberal, and, having swept through all the first phases of anxiety and suspense, found no small part of our measure of the matter settle down to an almost luxurious study of our multiplied defenders after the fact, as I may call it, or in the light of that acquaintance with them as products supremely tried and tested which I began by speaking of. We were up to our necks in this relation before we could turn round, and what upwards of a year's experience of it has done in the contributive and enriching way may now well be imagined. I might feel that my marked

Digitized by Google

generalisation, the main hospital impression, steeps the case in too strong or too stupid a synthesis, were it not that to consult my memory, a recollection of countless associative contacts, is to see the emphasis almost absurdly thrown on my quasi-paradox. Just so it is of singular interest for the witnessing mind itself to feel the happy truth stoutly resist any qualifying hint—since I *am* so struck with the charm, as I can only call it, of the tone and temper of the man of action, the creature appointed to advance and explode and destroy, and elaborately instructed as to how to do these things, reduced to helplessness in the innumerable instances now surrounding us. It doesn't in the least take the edge from my impression that his sweet reasonableness, representing the opposite end of his wondrous scale, is probably the very oldest story of the touching kind in the world; so far indeed from my claiming the least originality for the appealing appearance as it has lately reached me from so many sides, I find its suggestion of vast communities, communities of patience

Digitized by Google

and placidity, acceptance and submission pushed to the last point, to be just what makes the whole show most illumination.

'Wonderful that, from east to west, they must *all* be like this,' one says to oneself in presence of certain consistencies, certain positive monotonies of aspect; 'wonderful that if joy of battle (for the classic term, in spite of new horrors, seems clearly still to keep its old sense,) has, to so attested a pitch, animated these forms, the disconnection of spirit should be so prompt and complete, should hand the creature over as by the easiest turn to the last refinements of accommodation. The disconnection of the flesh, of physical function in whatever ravaged area, *that* may well be measureless; but how interesting, if the futility of such praise doesn't too much dishonour the subject, the exquisite anomaly of the intimate readjustment of the really more inflamed and exasperated part, or in other words of the imagination, the captured, the haunted vision, to life at its most innocent and most ordered!' To that point one's unvarying

Digitized by Google

thought of the matter, which yet, though but a meditation without a conclusion, becomes the very air in which fond attention spends itself. So far as commerce of the acceptable, the tentatively helpful kind goes, one looks for the key to success then, among the victims, exactly on that ground of the apprehension pacified and almost, so to call it, trivialised. The attaching thing becomes thus one's intercourse with the imagination of the particular patient subject, the individual himself, in the measure in which this interest bears us up and carries us along; which name for the life of his spirit has to cover, by a considerable stretch, all the ground. By the stretch of the name, moreover, I am far from meaning any stretch of the faculty itself—which remains for the most part a considerably contracted or inert force, a force in fact often so undeveloped as to be insusceptible of measurement at all, so that one has to resort, in face of the happy fact that communion still does hold good, to some other descriptive sign for it. That sign, however, fortunately presents itself

Digitized by Google

with inordinate promptitude and fits to its innocent head with the last perfection the cap, in fact the very crown, of an office that we can only appraise as predetermined good nature. We after this fashion score our very highest on behalf of a conclusion, I think, in feeling that whether or no the British warrior's good nature has much range of fancy, his imagination, whatever there may be of it, is at least so good-natured as to show absolutely everything it touches, everything without exception, even the worst machinations of the enemy, in that colour. Variety and diversity of exhibition, in a world virtually divided as now into hospitals and the preparation of subjects for them, are, I accordingly conceive, to be looked for quite away from the question of physical patience, of the general consent to suffering and mutilation, and, instead of that, in this connection of the sort of mind and thought, the sort of moral attitude, that are born of the sufferer's other relations; which I like to think of as being different from country to country, from class to class, and

Digitized by Google

as having their fullest national and circumstantial play.

It would be of the essence of these remarks, could I give them within my space all the particular applications naturally awaiting them, that they pretend to refer here to the British private soldier only—generalisation about his officers would take us so considerably further and so much enlarge our view. The high average of the beauty and modesty of these, in the stricken state, causes them to affect me, I frankly confess, as probably the very flower of the human race. One's apprehension of 'Tommy'—and I scarce know whether more to dislike the liberty this mode of reference takes with him, or to incline to retain it for the tenderness really latent in it—is in itself a theme for fine notation, but it has brought me thus only to the door of the boundless hospital ward in which, these many months, I have seen the successive and the so strangely quiet tides of his presence ebb and flow, and it stays me there before the incalculable vista. The perspective stretches away,

Digitized by Google

in its mild order, after the fashion of a tunnel boring into the very character of the people, and so going on for ever—never arriving or coming out, that is, at anything in the nature of a station, a junction or a terminus. So it draws off through the infinite of the common personal life, but planted and bordered, all along its passage, with the thick-growing flower of the individual illustration, this sometimes vivid enough and sometimes pathetically pale. The great fact, to my now so informed vision, is that it undiscourageably continues and that an unceasing repetition of its testifying particulars seems never either to exhaust its sense or to satisfy that of the beholder. Its sense, indeed, if I may so far simplify, is pretty well always the same, that of the jolly fatalism above-mentioned, a state of moral hospitality to the practices of fortune, however outrageous, that may at times fairly be felt as providing amusement, providing a new and thereby a refreshing turn of the personal situation, for the most interested party. It is true that one may be sometimes

Digitized by Google

moved to wonder which *is* the most interested party, the stricken subject in his numbered bed or the friendly, the unsated inquirer who has tried to forearm himself against such a measure of the 'criticism of life' as might well be expected to break upon him from the couch in question, and who yet, a thousand occasions for it having been, all round him, inevitably neglected, finds this ingenious provision quite left on his hands. He may well ask himself what he is to do with people who so consistently and so comfortably content themselves with *being*—being for the most part incuriously and instinctively admirable—that nothing whatever is left of them for reflection as distinguished from their own practice; but the only answer that comes is the reproduction of the note. He may, in the interest of appreciation, try the experiment of lending them some scrap of a complaint or a curse in order that they shall meet him on congruous ground, the ground of encouragement to his own participating impulse. They are imaged, under that possibility, after

Digitized by Google

the manner of those unfortunates, the very poor, the victims of a fire or shipwreck, to whom you have to lend something to wear before they can come to thank you for helping them. The inmates of the long wards, however, have no use for any imputed or derivative sentiments or reasons; they feel in their own way, they feel a great deal, they don't at all conceal from you that to have seen what they have seen is to have seen things horrible and monstrous—but there is no estimate of them for which they seek to be indebted to you, and nothing they less invite from you than to show them that such visions must have poisoned their world. Their world isn't in the least poisoned; they have assimilated their experience by a process scarce at all to be distinguished from their having healthily got rid of it.

The case thus becomes for you that they consist wholly of their applied virtue, which is accompanied with no waste of consciousness whatever. The virtue may strike you as having been, and as still being, greater in some examples than in others,

Digitized by Google

but it has throughout the same sign of differing at almost no point from a supreme amiability. How can creatures so amiable, you allow yourself vaguely to wonder, have welcomed even for five minutes the stress of carnage? and how can the stress of carnage, the murderous impulse at the highest pitch, have left so little distortion of the moral nature? It has left none at all that one has at the end of many months been able to discover; so that perhaps the most steadying and refreshing effect of intercourse with these hospital friends is through the almost complete rest from the facing of generalisations to which it treats you. One would even like, perhaps, as a stimulus to talk, more generalisation; but one gets enough of that out in the world, and one doesn't get there nearly so much of what one gets in this perspective, the particular perfect sufficiency of the extraordinary principle, whatever it is, which makes the practical answer so supersede any question or any argument that it seems fairly to have acted by chronic instinctive anticipation, the habit of freely throwing

Digitized by Google

the personal weight into any obvious opening. The personal weight, in its various forms and degrees, is what lies there with a head on the pillow and whatever wise bandages thereabout or elsewhere, and it becomes interesting in itself, and just in proportion, I think, to its having had all its history after the fact. All its history is that of the particular application which has brought it to the pass at which you find it, and is a stream round about which you have to press a little hard to make it flow clear. Then, in many a case, it does flow, certainly, as clear as one could wish, and with the strain that it is always somehow English history and illustrates afresh the English way of doing things and regarding them, of feeling and naming them. The sketch extracted is apt to be least coloured when the prostrate historian, as I may call him, is an Englishman of the English; it has more point, though not perhaps more essential tone, when he is a Scot of the Scots, and has most when he is an Irishman of the Irish; but there is absolutely no difference, in the light of race and

Digitized by Google

save as by inevitable variation from individual to individual, about the really constant and precious matter, the attested possession on the part of the contributor of a free loose undisciplined quantity of being to contribute.

This is the palpable and ponderable, the admirably appreciable, residuum—as to which if I be asked just how it is that I pluck the flower of amiability from the bramble of an individualism so bristling with accents, I am afraid I can only say that the accents would seem by the mercy of chance to fall together in the very sense that permits us to detach the rose with the fewest scratches. The rose of active good nature, irreducible, incurable, or in other words all irreflective, *that* is the variety which the individualistic tradition happens, up and down these islands, to wear upon its ample breast—even it may be with considerable effect of monotony. There it is, for what it is, and the very simplest summary of one's poor bedside practice is perhaps to confess that one has most of all kept one's nose buried in it. There hangs about the poor

Digitized by Google

practitioner by that fact, I profess, an aroma not doubtless at all mixed or in the least mystical, but so unpervertedly wholesome that what can I pronounce it with any sort of conscience but sweet? That is the rough, unless I rather say the smooth, report of it; which covers of course, I hasten to add, a constant shift of impression within the happy limits. Did I not, by way of introduction to these awaiters of acknowledgment, find myself first of all, early in the autumn, in presence of the first aligned rows of lacerated Belgians?—the eloquence of whose mere mute expression of their state, and thereby of their cause, remains to me a vision unforgettable for ever, and this even though I may not here stretch my scale to make them, Flemings of Flanders though they were, fit into my remarks with the English of the English and the Scotch of the Scotch. If other witnesses might indeed here fit in they would decidedly come nearest, for there were aspects under which one might almost have taken them simply for Britons comparatively starved of sport and, to

Digitized by Google

make up for that, on straighter and homelier terms with their other senses and appetites. But their effect, thanks to their being so seated in everything that their ripe and rounded temperament had done for them, was to make their English entertainers, and their successors in the long wards especially, seem ever so much more complicated —besides making of what had happened to themselves, for that matter, an enormity of outrage beyond all thought and pity. Their fate had cut into their spirit to a peculiar degree through their flesh, as if they had had an unusual thickness of this, so to speak—which up to that time had protected while it now but the more exposed and, collectively, entrapped them; so that the ravaged and plundered domesticity that one felt in them, which was mainly what they had to oppose, made the terms of their exile and their suffering an extension of the possible and the dreadful. But all that vision is a chapter by itself—the essence of which is perhaps that it has been the privilege of this placid and sturdy people to show the world

Digitized by Google

a new shade and measure of the tragic and the horrific. The first wash of the great Flemish tide ebbed at any rate from the hospitals—creating moreover the vast needs that were to be so unprecedentedly met, and the native procession which has prompted these remarks set steadily in. I have played too uncertain a light, I am well aware, not arresting it at half the possible points, yet with one aspect of the case staring out so straight as to form the vivid moral that asks to be drawn. The deepest impression from the sore human stuff with which such observation deals is that of its being strong and sound in an extraordinary degree for the conditions producing it. These conditions represent, one feels at the best, the crude and the waste, the ignored and neglected state; and under the sense of the small care and scant provision that have attended such hearty and happy growths, struggling into life and air with no furtherance to speak of, the question comes pressingly home of what a better economy might, or verily mightn't, result in. If this abundance

Digitized by Google

all slighted and unencouraged can still comfort us, what wouldn't it do for us tended and fostered and cultivated? That is my moral, for I believe in Culture—speaking strictly now of the honest and of our own congruous kind.

GLASGOW: W. COLLINS SONS AND CO. LTD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

313.3
J 27wr

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD AUXILIARY LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(650) 723-9201
salcirc@sulmail.stanford.edu
All books are subject to recall.
DATE DUE

JUN 30 2001

DEC 2000

SEP 17 2005

SEP 17 2005

ST 4th S
RK CITY
Out-of-Print Books

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 011 972 473
313.3
J 27wr

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD AUXILIARY LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(650) 723-9201
salcirc@sulmail.stanford.edu
All books are subject to recall.
DATE DUE

JUN 3 0 2001
DEC 0 2000
SEP 1 9 2005
SEP 1 9 2005

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 011 972 473
313.3
J 27wr

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD AUXILIARY LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(650) 723-9201
salcirc@sulmail.stanford.edu
All books are subject to recall.
DATE DUE

JUN 3 0 2001
DEC 0 2000
SEP 1 9 2005
SEP 1 9 2005

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google